of the consumers. Steps which have been taken by Government to protect the interests of the consumers are:

(i) Government has specified Rs. 72/- (plus taxes) as the maximum price of basic service tier, consisting of not less than 30 free-to-air channels of different genres of entertainment, news, sports, children's programmes and music. Free-to-air channels beyond 30 would also be made available to subscribers within the maximum amount mentioned above.

(ii) Consumers will have the choice to pay for only those pay channels which they choose to watch.

(iii) Consumers will have a control over the content they wish to view.

(iv) It has also been made obligatory for cable operators to make provisions for rent, security deposit, refund warranty, repair and maintenance of Set Top Boxes (STBs).

(v) Some Multi System Operators (MSOs), Cable Operators have come out with consumer-friendly schemes through which the STBs will be available to consumers.

(vi) Government has rationalised the duty on import of STBs and its components to make it affordable.

Policy for foreign news agencies

81. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether after keeping the issue of allowing the foreign news agencies to operate directly from India in abeyance for over a year, Government have now decided to review the existing policy governing them;

(b) if so, whether Government have called for opinions and suggestions for continuation or modification of the policy;

(c) if so, the views and suggestions received from various agencies;

(d) to what extent these have been examined; and

(e) by when a final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) Opinions and suggestions, on modification or continuation of the policy regarding operation of foreign news agencies within the country, have been invited by the Government.

(e) The time-frame for taking a final decision in a policy matter of this nature cannot be stated at this stage.

Scheme on CAS

82. SHRI CHO S. RAMASWAMY:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the scheme of Conditional Access System is facing problems in its implementation;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the cable operators are not coming to terms regarding the implementation of the scheme;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the consumers are not keen to go for the set top box and prefer to view through the cable operators; and

(d) if so, what compromising formula is being worked out to protect the consumers and the steps taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) After monitoring the preparedness of different stakeholders to introduce the CAS and after extensive discussions with the stakeholders, Broadcasters, Multi System Operators, Cable Operators, Consumer Groups, etc., it has been decided to take up implementation of CAS in a phased zone-wise manner in the metros of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata and in the entire Chennai Metropolitan area, w.e.f. 1.9.2003. The intervening period will be utilized to step up preparedness for smooth roll out of CAS and for educating the subscribers and increasing awareness. Some MSOs/Cable Operators have come out with consumer-friendly schemes through which the STBs will be made available to consumers. Copy of Notification issued on 10th July, 2003 is available on Ministry's website "www.mib.nic.in".